



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Minutes

Date: Sep 22th, 2021

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees: *Executive committee*: Christopher Tonkin (chair), Doug Greenfield, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner), Officer Neil Simard (APD, COBWEB)

Members of the public: Linda Epstein (Appleton/Mass Design Review Committee), Roderick Holland (Member-at-large, Town Meeting precinct 7), Stephan Miller (resident), Petru Sofio (Member-at-large), Ryan Stinson

1. Greetings and Introductions, ground rules for online meetings.

Christopher Tonkin advised that the meeting is held remotely related to COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency. Tonkin notified attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirmed the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

See:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

2. Approval of the outstanding minutes for previous meetings (August)

Doug Mayo-Wells confirms that in August minutes a reference to "Lake Street" in Other Business section should have been "Mill Street." (The issue is that the stop sign is on the left hand side when approaching the intersection westbound.)

Christopher Tonkin moves to approve minutes from August, as amended by Daniel Amstutz and Scott Smith, and including Mill Street correction.

Smith seconds; motion carries 5-0, 1 abstention

3. Report from COBWEB Officer.

Tonkin: Advised by Lt. Pedrini of an email from a citizen concerned about cyclists on the wrong side of the road, without lights. Elevated into a general issue about bicycles operated at night without lights.

Off. Neil Simard: Keeping an eye out. Not observing in any particular area of town. Informing people of the legal requirement for a light (many are unaware, or unprepared for seasonal change).

Tonkin: Committee works to support more illumination on bikes. Had previously sent mailing, designed with help from Alta Planning and Design to the Town (included with tax bill) that indicated visible distances for dark clothing, reflective clothing, and lights. Should we do a new campaign, in conjunction with APD?

Simard: Seems to be an issue when seasons are changing. People usually have lights on bikes once it gets darker earlier.

Tonkin: Have observed cyclists who seem to be rushing home before it gets dark.

4. TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) report

Smith: Howard Muise has retired as chair, new chair is Laura Swan (School Committee representative), who lives in East Arlington, is a great nomination. (Have worked together on Thompson School issues. September 8 meeting had a light agenda, not much specifically related to cycling.) Some discussion about making light at Mystic/Chestnut more motorist/pedestrian friendly.

Apropos of previous item, good time of year to do some publicity about lights for bikes/visible clothing for pedestrians (maybe on bikeway website). Can likely locate old flier.

Petru Sofio: Can promote in the high school.

Sofio: Mill St crossing signal has been unreliable, flashing beacon was not working yesterday, narrowly avoided crash. Could raise bike priority when in crosswalk as an issue for the Minuteman Bikeway Planning project.

Tonkin: Has been problematic, because crossing lights are not synchronized with the light at Mill/Summer St, need to be alert for traffic in both directions even if one side is stopped. Sightlines are still not great, although better after western side cleared out.

Smith: Sent PDF, printer's proof from 6 years ago. Re: Bike priority, in some states motor vehicle traffic is required to yield to bikes as well as pedestrians in crosswalk.

Sofio: Could possibly add cross-bike indication to crosswalks. Questions value the stop sign, it results in more time in the intersection.

5. Tour of Arlington for 2021: go ahead or not?

Tonkin: Adam, Jack, Scott and myself worked out a tour/locations, but don't have a plan to staff the locations. Christopher and Petru are available (for Sun 9/26)

Mayo-Wells: Have we publicized it already? Not much lead time.

Johnson: Haven't had time to review the document, it needs substantial work to stand on its own, although Adam and Scott did good work. The document does multiple things, but they are not connected: It describes what ABAC does, but tour doesn't connect to that, stops are missing context of why they are relevant. Trying to fit on one 2-sided piece of paper, but it may not. May need a website with QR code or shortened URL for smartphone access. Won't be ready by 9/26. Could maybe do a dry run to discuss, flesh out?

Tonkin: for Spring, or later this year?

Johnson: Either may be possible depending on weather. Still needs to be self-guided this year, hard to say for next year.

Tonkin: Was still thinking self-guided for next year.

Johnson: Self-guided needs to be clearer than what we've done in the past.

Tonkin: Available for dry run, let's try that.

Smith: Starts at the Drake Village, Reservoir, so Hurd Field parking lot. Then Mass/Appleton, the High School, Mill St/Bikepath, rotary on Mystic Valley Parkway, Arizona Terr getting onto the Greenway, Broadway&Greenway, Mass Ave&Greenway, Alewife/Magnolia Field, Lake St, finish in Arlington Center.

Mayo-Wells (via chat): Dry run independently or together?

Tonkin: Let's meet so we can discuss where there may be questions about the best route.

Johnson: Meet at Hurd field, 9:30?

6. Mass Ave/Mystic St/Bikeway traffic signal intersection issues, anything new.

Smith: Nothing new at TAC (but discussed Chestnut & Mystic)

Sofio: Continuing to observe overflow in the bike box. Last week took full lane (over sharrows) toward High School in the morning, was hassled by driver. Maybe sharrows could be refreshed to improve visibility and added eastbound as well.

Tonkin: Sharrows right in front of Swan Place was planned, should raise as an issue.

Sofio: Green-backed sharrows would be preferred.

Tonkin: Would be good to raise to DPW early next year, to get into the painting season plan (if not sooner).

Sofio: planning a compliance study, comparing compliance at Mass Ave/Mystic to similar Cambridge intersection Broadway/Galileo Galilei Way, use comparison data to advocate for vertical arrows instead of green ball signals.

7. Protected bike lanes coming to Mass Ave in North Cambridge

See:

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/streetsandtransportation/projectsandprograms/massavedudleytoalewifebrookpkwy>

and

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/Traffic/2021/09/massavedudleytoalewifecommunitymeetingforposting.pdf>

Tonkin: Not sure how new lanes may affect transition into/out of Arlington.

Sofio: Have notes from the Zoom meeting. Eastbound into Cambridge, starts at the border with bus/bike lane, then after Columbus Ave transitions to separated/protected bike lane, Buffered bike lane is a shared bus/bike lane, with a bus-only lane and single vehicle travel lane. (Bus lane will permit loading/dropoff outside of rush hour.) Outbound bus lane is also under consideration.

Tonkin: Are plans firm, when will this happen?

Sofio: In November. Still some work to identify a solution for transition from Arlington.

Amstutz: MBTA, Town, and DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) all need to be part of the conversation, since DCR has jurisdiction over the intersection. Arlington supports consistent extension of the inbound bus lane across the intersection; the limitation of Arlington's bus lane has always been that it only gets commuters through the bottleneck on the Arlington side. Outbound requires coordination with the T, I'm already in contact with the project manager but need to follow up.

8. Medford Street bike lanes, the case for them

See: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/58046>

for sharrow-spacing guidance:

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2016/03/10/american-sharrow-inventor-i-was-always-under-pressure-to-do-less/>

for colored bike facility guidance:

<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bikeway-signing-marking/colored-bike-facilities/>

Sofio: Discussed last meeting, wanted to make a case for bike lanes. Have experienced multiple recent instances of driver hostility, pavement has a lot of space, but not used much for parking.

Bike lane proposal would have a 2' buffer between bike and 11.5' vehicle lanes (to accommodate bus/truck traffic), and allow for some parking on the north/west side, and a right turn lane onto Lewis Ave.

Also produced a shared lane marking alternative. Would like to see sharrows spaced closer when used (175' or less; 150' is preferred per sharrow creator James MacKay) and any sharrows should be green-backed to maximize visibility. Shared lane proposal maintains 11.5' traffic lanes with 7' parking lanes on both sides. On the hill near Hayes street, however, recommend a bike lane for uphill traffic.

Overall case for bike lanes:

- Parking utilization is low (and inadequate space with shoulder widths)
- 35mph speed limit is high for the Town, Park Ave has 35mph limit but has bike lanes
- Heavy truck and bus traffic
- Aligns with Connect Arlington plan

Doug Greenfield: Can you clarify the legality of parking?

Sofio: Technically legal, but no identified parking lane, and narrow shoulders do not indicate parking availability. Current travel lanes are very wide, 16' or more.

Greenfield: Suggest rewording that for better clarity.

Mayo-Wells: Is morning traffic dropping off students at St. Agnes school relevant?

Sofio: Likely not, proposal starts after Warren Street. (Not exactly sure of the scope of re-paving).

Johnson: What exact area is covered?

Sofio: From Warren St. to Mystic roundabout.

Johnson: Who has jurisdiction, State, or the Town (as it is Rt. 60)?

Amstutz: It is a state numbered route maintained locally. State jurisdiction depends on scope of changes. If you are keeping 2 vehicle lanes, and it is not a state-maintained highway, the state is not involved in parking decisions unless parking interferes with traffic flow. It is a truck route and used by MBTA buses (Rtes 80 & 95), so agree that at least 11' travel lanes are required. Parking is generally permitted in the Town except where expressly prohibited.

Muris Kobaslija: If we like this proposal, what is the process (Whether this proposal, or going through a formal study to make recommendations)?

Amstutz: Requires Select Board action because it creates a parking prohibition along Medford St. Not dissimilar to Mass Ave/Appleton in that sense. This is also a challenge for Bates, River Sts, etc.. Need to create a process/policy to justify and prioritize bike facilities over permitted parking.

The current design guide matrix shuts down the conversation anywhere parking is currently permitted, DPW is not empowered to go to the select board to request that parking spaces be repurposed.

Best approach may be to hold off on bike markings for now, try by spring to get a revised design matrix revised, in alignment with Connect Arlington and apply that. (Painting sharrows now could create an issue, "we just put down sharrows, why do we need to make further changes?")

Any design proposal needs to accommodate the bus stops, possibly similar to how Cambridge approaches bus/bike or Mass Ave/Appleton proposal. The right turn lane onto Lewis would likely not be used much, so a buffered bike lane there might be better.

Smith: Overall like the proposal, but a few issues:

1. Pedestrian crossing has been a perennial issue, there have been requests for crosswalk at Hamlet St, not pedestrian-friendly at Warren St. A comprehensive plan would be pedestrian friendly, might include a refuge island in the center of crosswalks if it can be squeezed in, could build up local resident support.
2. Need to connect this to the Chestnut St project, so the proposal should cover Medford St west/south of Warren St, there are issues with merge.
3. As a fallback, to take a step in the right direction, right now shoulders are very narrow and travel lanes are huge, which encourages speeding. On Lake St, and Summer St, applied a 11-12' travel lane with 5-6' shoulder (essentially an unofficial bike lane – wide enough to bike in, but not wide enough to park in). "Quick and dirty" improvement which could fit in the remaining month before painting season ends, given that Lake St, Lowell St markings have not been applied.

Sofio: Just saw bid results for painting, should be in by November

Tonkin: Who owns revising the design matrix, Planning Department?

Amstutz: Yes, working on that, no hard timeline yet, building on work done in conjunction with Mass Ave/Appleton. Did an initial parking utilization study in the Heights/Park Ave. Need to understand parking utilization/turnover as a metric for discussions. For a case like Medford St, what is the level of parking utilization where we can say "we don't need this parking because it's not used much"? What is the level of parking utilization where we can get a bike lane on one side, and accommodate all parking on the other side? Need to help the board make decisions with quantitative data, not gut feelings.

Tonkin: ABAC interested in supporting.

Smith: Stephan [Miller] and I were original authors

Sofio: When DPW can't fit in a bike lane, as backup enhanced (green-backed) sharrows would be better than white-only sharrows.

Mayo-Wells: May need to get green paint into the plan/budget.

Amstutz: Yes, and use cases/guidelines/consistency on how sharrows are applied.

9. Fallout from the Select Board vote on the Design Review Committee recommendations for Mass Ave/Appleton

Tonkin: Everyone is aware of the outcome of the Select Board meeting? We are disappointed, but something is happening, better than nothing.

Sofio: Talked with Phil [Goff], and it sounds like this fall DPW will only install bump outs and flex posts. Installation of sharrows and/or bike lanes will wait until after parking study, and the board may have further action.

Amstutz: Yes, conducting parking study in the next few weeks, exact plan to be determined, whether more than one day, etc.. May need help, but need to be careful that any assistance can't be seen as partisan.

Holland: Need to make sure study can't be manipulated, if time was known in advance people could possibly alter parking behavior to skew the results.

Amstutz: Won't publicize times in advance. Referencing MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) guidance on how to measure utilization and turnover, will repeat checks every hour.

Linda Epstein: To measure turnover, is it permissible for a parking officer to mark tires, to reduce labor of manual checks every hour?

Amstutz: Interesting suggestion, but marking tires is a private property issue, no longer permitted and parking enforcement is usually more in Town center versus the heights (where the meters are). Likely more a project for the Planning Department.

Sofio: Select Board vote was disappointing, a lot of work went into advocating for bike lanes, including committee vote. Many other bike advocates were disappointed as well.

Johnson: Advocates did a good job presenting to the Select Board. 5 years ago, the vote likely would have been all against bike lanes rather than a split vote.

Holland: This has made a stir in the bike advocacy community, beyond Arlington, repercussions may be felt in Town.

10. General updates from Daniel:

See: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/58044/>

Amstutz: 4 things to cover

a. Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project

- Working with Kittelson & Associates, Inc, and subcontractor Greenman-Pederson Inc (GPI) [landscape architecture/engineering firm]
- Beginning with existing conditions data collection
- Developing a survey for distribution in a few weeks, on perception of bikeway, how people use it - thanks to Muris, Jack, Christopher, Petru for your comments. Considering a mix of on-line/in-person distribution of the survey, including how to reach users of the bikeway outside of the Town.
- Public meeting planned for October
- Complete by May 2021 to prepare for FY budgeting

Tonkin: Physical handout could have link or QR code

Amstutz: Yes, or shortened URL

Sofio: Recommend QR code. How should ABAC associates provide feedback to Kittelson, as members of the public, or members of the committee?

Amstutz: Will likely attend one or more ABAC meetings. Are there specific concerns now?

Tonkin: Concerns about different usage patterns based on time of day, different traffic volumes, different speeds, etc. Cyclists' speed is perceived to be increasing as e-bikes become more prevalent, but can't set/enforce speed limits, because the bikeway is not a public right-of-way, could State-level action change that?

Amstutz: This is definitely identified as an area of concern. The MBTA real estate property aspect presents a challenge for doing things on the bikeway outside of the pavement. It could be difficult to try to acquire the property from the MBTA to have more control.

Tonkin: Is this typical of other bikeways?

Amstutz: Hard to generalize, some are on utility corridors, so have restrictions imposed by Eversource or National Grid. The Minuteman is a rail-to-trail, some other trails are encumbered to permit the reversion of the trail back to rail at some point.

Holland: This kind of agreement is referred to as "Railbanking" [see <https://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/acquisition/railbanking/>] There is also a major sewer line under part of the bikeway.

Amstutz: Was not aware of a sewer line.

Tonkin: Last repaving was done in conjunction with fiber optic cable installation.

b. MassTrails grant – Mystic River to Minuteman Bikeway Feasibility Study

- Trail connection from Mystic river/Parkway to bikeway, including major intersections (e.g., rotary at Medford St/Mystic, Summer St). Must complete by June 30, funded by Mass Trails
- RFP has closed, received 3 proposals, working with Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation and TAC to evaluate them and, will select mid October

c. Minuteman Bikeway Eco Counter

- Pedestrian data still has accuracy issues, bike data is more accurate, user split is accurate.
- Graphs updated with numbers for July and August. No data in March because of battery issue; June is the best month of the year so far, slightly less in July, August. Numbers are lower than 2019, similar to 2020. Excited to have a full year of data.
- Totals for the last 30 days (22 Aug-21-Sep), show some low-traffic days, likely bad weather, but over 4,000 trips on peak day.
- YTD over 400,000 trips, over 223,000 bike trips.
- Resolved issue with pedestrian trip data on 26 Aug (bugs were sheltering in post and covering sensor)

Johnson: Curious if Lexington has similar reliability issues with their bikeway counter (near Rt 225/4), may be a different model, post looks different.

Tonkin: Have heard it is the same model, installed a couple of years ago.

Amstutz: Was not aware of this counter. Our issues had multiple causes: bad equipment, battery failure, insects (which is a common problem).

Sofio: Would a visible counter (like those on Broadway in Cambridge) be of benefit at some point?

Amstutz: Would have to find somewhere with high visibility to put it. Could be cool, not inexpensive (\$10-15K).

d. Bluebikes data

- Nearly 2000 more trips this month than last (although one more week of the month)
- Stations near bikeway perform best
- Bluebikes set all-time daily record of 18,000 trips on 11 Sep, breaking record set just one week before (16,200)
- Arlington data shows steady increase from April through August
- Overall system use shows 2021 outpacing 2019 (and far above 2020)

e. Bluebikes Stations – Winter Operations and Possible Off-Street Locations

- Off-street stations to be picked up week of Nov 22
- Redeploy in April
- Town pays \$2,500/station storage fee, off-street locations operate year-round and avoid fee, relocation fee is also waived if it permits year-round operation.
- Potential to relocate Railroad Lot, Linwood St stations, most productive in Arlington, relocate close to current location. Linwood relocation requires occurrence from Parks & Rec Commission (and a new sidewalk section).

Tonkin: wondering about the possibility of e-bikes to help with hills as the network expands toward the Heights.

Amstutz: Motivate/Lyft have talked about adding e-bikes to the system, but no clear indication when this might happen.

f. Other business/Updates

- Amenities (bike racks, benches) added at Lake St, using Shared Streets funding. This was a bid alternate not originally funded as part of the Lake St signal project.
 - We talked about the Mass Ave bike lane project from Alewife Brook Pkwy to Dudley St; the Mid-Mass Ave Safety Improvement Project addresses the span between Trowbridge St and Inman St (between Harvard Square/Central Square), so almost all of Mass Ave in Cambridge will have protected bike lanes.
- g. Sofio: Mid-Mass project almost finished, looks great. There is an issue with trolley buses (overhead power lines), an impact study advised removing parking completely which is likely unfeasible. Median could be removed, which would provide adequate space for buffers, but would require construction, traffic signal relocation. Massaveforall.com is working with Cambridge Bike Safety and some businesses to explore options for quick build. Cambridge has posted the list of protected bike lanes to be installed before April 30th.

11. Tales from the Bikeway, matters arising from the Bikeway e.g. encroachment and center line markings.

Tonkin: Two items to note

- Contacted Daniel about the damaged fence at former Gold's Gym, wire was hanging over the bikeway. The wire has been removed, however, there's still a hole in the fence, over a culvert where there has previously been flood damage. May still need assessment/fixes.
- Received email from Kevin Falcone of Lexington Bike Advisory Committee, he will be leaving Lexington and resigning as Chair. He reminds us that we have a Tri-town Bike meeting scheduled for November.

12. Other Business

See: <https://bikeleague.secure.force.com/storepage?cat=BFC>

Mayo-Wells: Lexington has a new Bike Friendly Community sign, on the bikeway just west of the town line. Can we get one too, maybe install it near Thorndike?

Tonkin: We do have one on Mass Ave, dates from our Bronze certification (not Silver).

Amstutz: Need to order from League Store and have DPW install it once we determine location. Likely not a problem, but not sure where we would fund from.

Tonkin: The Select Board had to approve originally. (There are two.)

Amstutz: May actually not require approval, because they are not regulatory.

Sofio: Bike parking at AHS is inadequate to meet demand (minimum 50 bikes/day), many students forced to park off of school grounds, or locking bikes to inappropriate structures (fences, benches, etc.). School has advised that illegally parked bikes may have locks cut/be removed. Trying to meet with the school administration to discuss options.

Tonkin: AHS rebuild plans do include some bike parking.

Kobaslija: Not sure of exact numbers, but definitely more than 50, but may continue to be an issue.

Amstutz: School could potentially buy movable bike parking, install as an interim measure while school is ongoing.

Sofio: There is also an issue of construction vehicles blocking the bike lane, (not parking directly along curb). Would like to get "bikes may use full lane" signs up.

Johnson: Was there an update about centerlines on the bikeway? They need to be repainted.

Tonkin: No update, but also need to replace crossing warnings by Trader Joe's (and relocate farther from crossing to give cyclists more advance warning).

Sofio: Also add pedestrian stencil at Lake St, some pedestrians are not moving out of the bike lane.

Amstutz: Town Request/Answer center is a good place to start.

Mayo-Wells moves to adjourn

Tonkin seconds; motion carries 5-0

Adjourned